

to best meet the needs of U.S. national security.

The Commission's first interim report, containing initial findings and the description of a strategic plan to complete its work, was delivered on June 5, 2006. The second interim report, delivered on March 1, 2007, was required by Public Law 109-364, the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, enacted on October 17, 2006. That second report examined 17 proposals contained in the National Defense Enhancement and National Guard Empowerment Act, and included 23 recommendations covering the broad spectrum of issues raised by the legislation.

The Commission's second report was thoroughly reviewed by both Congress and the Department of Defense, and careful consideration was given to the Commission's recommendations that have changed, in a fundamental way, the Department of Defense's role for domestic security, taking significant steps towards improvements to make the nation safer from man-made and natural disasters. Secretary of Defense Gates also has taken timely and decisive action to implement those recommendations not requiring legislation, and has advocated before Congress for those requiring legislation.

The final report of the Commission was constructed from 17 days of public hearings, involving 115 witnesses; 52 Commission meetings; more than 850 interviews; numerous site visits, forums, and panel discussions; and the detailed analysis of thousands of documents supplied at the Commission's request by the military services, government agencies, experts, and other stakeholders. It contains 6 major conclusions and 95 recommendations, supported by 163 findings. This prodigious, thorough effort met the expectations of Congress.

In conducting its work, the Commission gathered information, analyzed evidence, identified significant problems facing the reserve components, and sought to offer the best possible recommendations to solve the problems identified. The Commissioners stated clearly their belief that the problems identified in the report are systemic, have evolved over many years, and are not the product of any one official or administration. Many of the Commission's recommendations to solve those problems can now be implemented; however, a number of them will take years to reach full implementation and will require additional work by Congress and the executive branch.

At the core of these changes is the explicit recognition of the evolution of the reserve components from a purely strategic force, with lengthy mobilization times designed to meet threats from large nation-states, to an operational force. This operational reserve must be readily available for emergencies at home and abroad, and more fully integrated with active components. Simultaneously, this force must

retain its own required strategic elements and capabilities.

The Commission concluded that there will be greater reliance on the reserve components as part of its operational force for missions at home and abroad. Moreover, the Commission also concluded that the change from the reserve components' historic Cold War posture necessitates fundamental reforms to reserve components' homeland roles and missions, to personnel management systems, to equipping and training policies, to policies affecting families and employers, and to the organizations and structures used to manage the reserves. These reforms are essential to ensure that this operational reserve is feasible in the short term while sustainable over the long term. In fact, the Commission believes that the future of the all-volunteer force depends upon the continued success of our implementation of needed reforms to ensure that the reserve components are ready, capable, and available for both operational and strategic missions.

In reviewing the past several decades of diverse use of the reserve components, as an integral part of operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the homeland, most notably the Commission has found indisputable and overwhelming evidence of the need for future policymakers and the military to break with outdated policies and processes and implement fundamental, thorough reforms in these areas.

The members of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves share this view unanimously. The Commission notes that these recommendations will require the nation to reorder the priorities of the Department of Defense, thereby necessitating a major restructuring of laws and DOD's budget. While there are some costs associated with these recommendations, the Commission believes that the problems are serious, the need to address them is urgent, and the benefits of the reforms we identify more than exceed the expense of implementing them.

Clearly, the reserve force has proven itself to be a wise investment in our overall security structure and should be commended for their professional contributions to our Nation's defense. The Commission recognizes that these issues are extremely complex, and that there will be disagreement with some of the solutions it has proposed. That is to be expected. Commission members anticipate that this report will generate lively debate among the organizations and key policymakers responsible for protecting U.S. national security. With the submission of its last report, the Commission turns its findings, conclusions, and recommendations over to the legislative and executive branches, where Commission members feel confident that they will be carefully considered, improved upon, and implemented.

The Commission has provided America a blueprint for our work on the Na-

tional Guard and Reserves this year and in the future. Each of its 95 recommendations merits our careful consideration. The Senate Armed Services and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committees have already held hearings on the Commission's report, and we await the Department of Defense's formal response to its recommendations.

It is with profound admiration and gratitude that I extend our collective thanks for the service that this Commission has rendered to our nation and to our men and women in uniform. I know my colleagues will agree when I say that this Commission has made profound and substantive recommendations for reforming our National Guard and Reserves and that we look forward to working to address the issues raised by the Commission's final report.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL E. BAKER

• Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, it is a privilege for me today to honor Mr. Michael E. Baker as he retires as president of Maryknoll School. I want to express a heartfelt mahalo nui loa—thank you very much—and best wishes with my warmest aloha as he retires after 11 years at the helm of the school with an unsurpassed record of achievements. He leaves a legacy which benefited students and continues to do so and is appreciated by parents, alumni, and our educational community. His is a legacy of a great leader and educator.

As a former principal in our public school system, I agree wholeheartedly with the philosophy contained in Mr. Baker's "President's Message" in which he emphasize the critical importance of exceptional teachers in the commencement and development of students, intellectually and spiritually, and to inculcate them with these and all the other attributes necessary to develop into a valued member of our society. He has built on the solid foundation laid by his predecessors and attracted the very best faculty recognized for their excellence locally, regionally, and nationally.

As he retires from his stewardship of Maryknoll School to spend more time with his family, I also want to congratulate him for his leadership that made the Maryknoll School Community Center a reality. When completed, this much-needed first-rate center for the school's athletics program will be an important part of the school's curriculum as it continues to build success upon success for its students.

Mr. President, I join President Michael E. Baker's family, colleagues, friends, and the community in wishing him Godspeed as he enters the next phase of his life. He has earned the right to enjoy his family and the simple pleasures of life in retirement.●